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JOURNAL  
of  
EARLY SOUTHERN  
DECORATIVE ARTS

November, 1978  
Volume IV, Number 2  
The Museum of Early Southern  
Decorative Arts

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of  
EARLY SOUTHERN  
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## Contents

<i>William Little, Cabinetmaker of North Carolina</i>	1
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FRANK L. HORTON

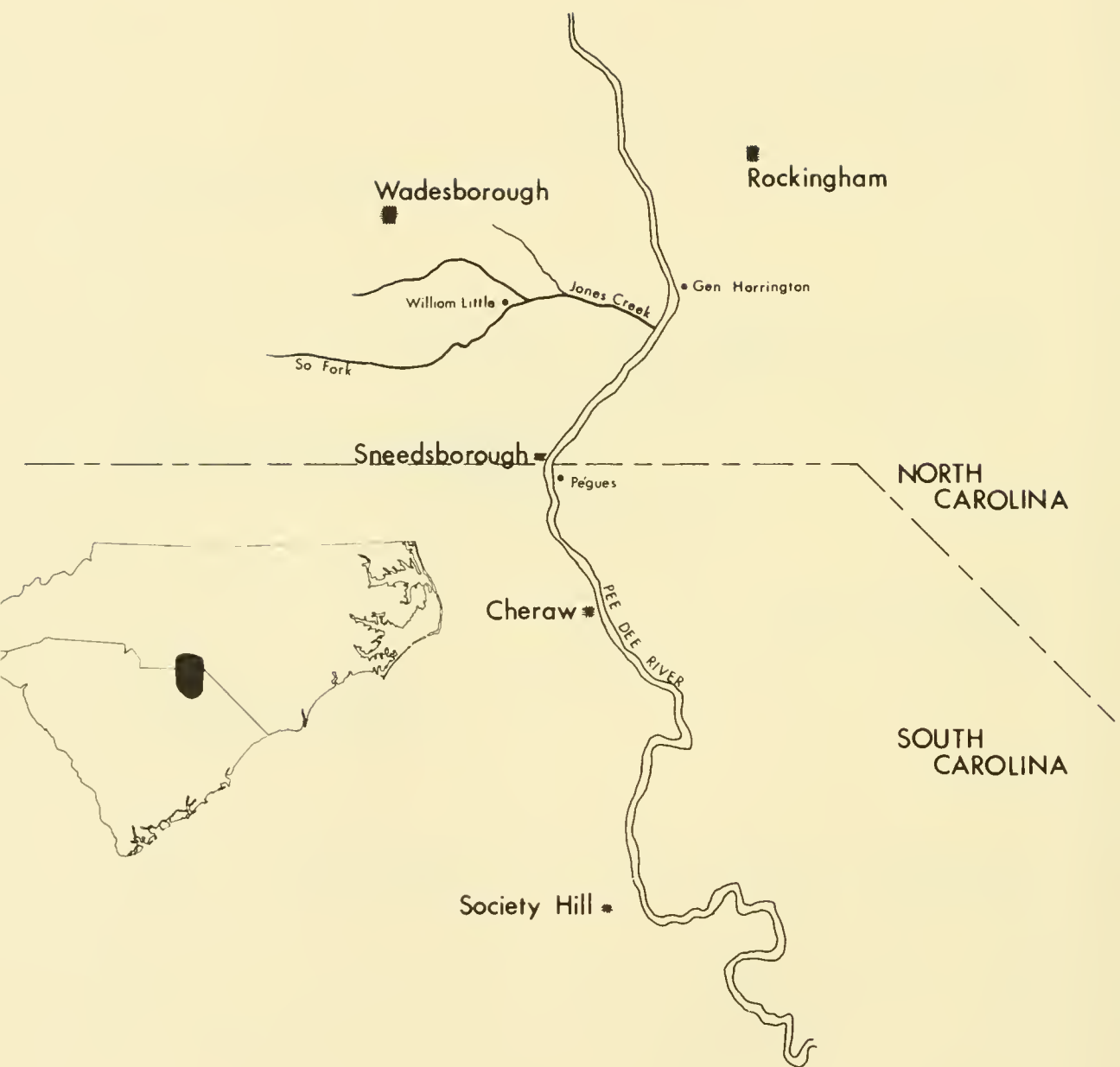
<i>William John Coffee, Sculptor-Painter—His Southern Experience</i>	26
--	----

BRADFORD L. RAUSCHENBERG

<i>Henry Benbridge: Portraits in Small from Norfolk</i>	51
---	----

CAROLYN J. WEEKLEY

<i>Donations to MESDA, April 1977 to October 1978</i>	65
---	----



*Figure 1. Map locating Sneedborough, William Little's first home, and the Jones Creek area, his second home, together with other locations where he is known to have had patrons for his cabinet shop.*

## William Little, Cabinetmaker of North Carolina

FRANK L. HORTON

*Thomas ais {says} you have some of the niseest  
furneter in your House ever he did see.*

The furniture made by William Little in the lower piedmont of North Carolina presents a pure English tradition of design and construction not readily found in areas so far from the coastal centers of cabinetmaking to the east. While English design characteristics can be seen elsewhere in the piedmont, they are usually mixed with German traits handed down from the middle Atlantic states by immigration through the Valley of Virginia. William Little did not follow the tide of immigration from Pennsylvania, but rather moved inland from the coast, and brought his interpretation of his north England background, tempered with his experiences in Norfolk and Charleston on the eastern seaboard.

William Little was the fourth child of John and Jane (Phillips) Little of Carlisle, northwest England. It is probable, knowing his birth date of May 10, 1775,<sup>1</sup> that he was apprenticed during his fourteenth year, 1789, to a Mr. Graham of "Bighead,"<sup>2</sup> and that he left his apprenticeship upon reaching his majority on May 10, 1796. It is unknown where he was employed first as a journeyman cabinetmaker. He may have remained with Mr. Graham, but he may have worked at Cargo, a small town just north of Carlisle and just below the Scottish border, as hinted in a letter from his brother-in-law many years later.<sup>3</sup>

It is uncertain what conditions brought about the immigration of William Little to America. He bade farewell to his brother John and sailed from Shields, across England from Carlisle, in late July, 1798.<sup>4</sup> For nine pounds William had purchased steerage passage on the *Europe*, bound for Norfolk, Virginia.<sup>5</sup>

There must have been delays in the sailing around the coast of England. The *Norfolk Herald*, October 6, 1798, reported "The brig *Europe*, capt. Kennan, arrived this morning in 7 weeks from Newcastle Upon-Tyne; the [news]papers brought by her are only to 1st August." The same newspaper reported, on November 22nd, that the *Europe* had cleared the Norfolk port for Jamaica, presumably leaving William Little working as a journeyman cabinetmaker in a shop in that Virginia port.

The personal *Bible* of Judith Steel Stanback Dockery, a granddaughter of William Little, has the notation: "William Little landed in Charleston, S. C., Tuesday, May 14, 1799." The date is interesting in being so specific. Two Charleston newspapers, the *South-Carolina Gazette* and the *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, published the next day, report only one vessel as arriving from Norfolk on May 14th, the schooner *Sally*, Captain Drummon, five days out of Norfolk.

Little must have left Norfolk without a definite job offer in Charleston. The first letter known to have been received in that city was addressed to "Mr. William Little, Cabinetmaker / Charlestown South Carolina America / to be put into the South Carolina Coffee House."<sup>6</sup> Employment was soon found, however, in the shop of John Watson, cabinetmaker and upholsterer, in King Street, where he received a letter in care of this artisan.<sup>7</sup>

Watson apparently ran an extensive shop at 21 King Street. An earlier advertisement indicates that he kept a stock on hand of "Dining Tables, Card do.; Breakfast do.; Secretary and [with] Wardrobe; Wardrobes and Secretaries; Bason Stands; Chests of Drawers; a few dozen of handsome Drawing and Chamber Room Chairs and Sofas," and that he would make up "Mattresses, Curtains, Venetian Blinds, Carpets, Pavilions" on the shortest notice. He also carried "a handsome Assortment of plain Paper Hangings, with handsome Borders to suit," with "Papering done in a neat manner."<sup>8</sup> Working experiences in both Norfolk and Charleston were probably of

great value to journeyman William Little, especially in teaching him the ways of business in America as compared with his earlier life in north England.

Little's stay in Charleston was for only a few months, for he wrote his cousin, William Gillesby of Charleston, from some unknown place on January 31, 1800, and Gillesby answered, in April of that year, addressing Little in Sneedsborough, North Carolina.<sup>9</sup> (Fig. 1).

William kept his kin in England well informed of his planned moves, this time to the new town of Sneedsborough, in Anson County, a town planned to be at the headwaters of navigation of the Pee Dee River to the Atlantic at Georgetown. Those plans were not realized. A lone crumbling chimney and a few grave markers now mark the site of this once thriving community.

That William Little prospered in Sneedsborough there can be no doubt. The furniture he made survives to tell us that he was a competent cabinetmaker, well versed in the latest styles, and willing to accommodate his customers with furniture to suit their tastes and pocketbook. While all of his attributable furniture is of the same Federal style, it varies in decoration to indicate a wide range of prices charged. His construction methods are consistently good. His dovetailing, blocking, and joining are consistent enough to indicate that he had a tight control over his shop's production if, indeed, there were other workmen involved. Unfortunately, Anson County court records of this period are missing; we have no recorded evidence of apprentices Little might have trained.

It is apparent that William Little came to America with some financial backing, for in the few months that he spent on the coast he could not, as a journeyman cabinetmaker, have accumulated any wealth. And yet we know that he arrived in Sneedsborough with a black slave, whom he had purchased in Charleston.<sup>10</sup> It is presumed that he also arrived with a full chest of tools and enough money to set up shop, probably in rented quarters. His first purchase of land in Sneedsborough was for \$140 cash, January 23, 1802, for lots 69, 70, 71, and 72, bought from William Johnson, and bound by West, Market, and Meeting Streets.<sup>11</sup> This was the location of his home and probably his shop. He did not purchase other lots until 1812.<sup>12</sup>



The earliest documentary evidence of his production of furniture is a bill to Robert Troy, November 29, 1802, a copy of which Little kept,<sup>13</sup> for

1 Chest of Drawes	[£]10. 0.0
2 half round Dining Tables	9. 0.0
Jointing 2 tables to Ditto	0.10.0
1 Chamber Table	6. 0.0

Little's trade extended over a wide area but was concentrated along the Pee Dee River. We know of a secretary with bookcase (Fig. 7) purchased by Josiah J. Evans, an attorney-at-law in Society Hill, South Carolina. His trade with Robert J. Steele of Cheraw, South Carolina, is documented in an interesting letter, which reflects on the methods of payment of accounts during the early nineteenth century piedmont:

Sir Janr 25th 1803

I have sent by the bearer Joseph Tarburton 8 Bags of Cotten I wish to send you as much cotten and flower as will pay off the Charlestown debt

W'day I have sent you Some plank youl Measure it and give me Cr[edit] for What you think it is worth youl send by the bearer J. Tarburton the furniture and Enquire who hath any of the Jamica bread [breed] of Hogs and send me a Sow pig or a Boare or both. . . .

Ah Lad they tell me you have got a Letter fra England What sa they. are they Weal and What is the news. Il be down in a few Weeks and you can tell me the news

R. J. Steele<sup>14</sup>

William married Robert J. Steele's daughter Elizabeth on December 18, 1806.<sup>15</sup> A hint of the home they made in Sneedsborough is reflected in a letter to William from his brother George, in which he noted that he had received a letter from their brother Thomas, recently immigrated to America, "when he landed at Charlestown. . . . Thomas ais [says] you have some of the niseest furneter in your House ever he did see."<sup>16</sup>

We do not know how long William Little continued in the cabinetmaking business. There is perhaps an indication of his growing interest in agriculture as early as 1808, when he made a trip to Kentucky, perhaps to apprise himself of the conditions there for starting a farm. More definite word of this agricultural interest is expressed in late 1815, when brother Thomas wrote brother George that William was thinking of becoming a farmer. William continued, however, to receive letters at Sneysborough, but a letter from George in early 1819 congratulates him on his "very good crop last year," and for Elizabeth and William's "Six beautiful white headed Children."<sup>17</sup>

More tangible evidence of his farming interest is the purchase of farmland in the Jones Creek area of Anson County, the site of his future home, in October, 1817.<sup>18</sup> He must have established a home there by February, 1818, when he sold his Sneysborough lots 69, 70, 71, and 72 to Thomas Crawford for \$500, "including the house and improvements whereas the said William Little lately lived." For this price he included his lots 12, 28, 44, and 60, and Little had sold lots 143 and 144 to Samuel Knox a year earlier.<sup>19</sup>

The Little farm, which was not far south of Wadesboro, became the center of William Little's agricultural life, though he owned other farmlands elsewhere in Anson County. This was to be his last home, and it was here that he and Elizabeth were buried. This second house still stands today deserted to the elements and covered with kudzu vines, the family graveyard to one side, broken and desolate.

Today one views with wonder the little one-story T-shaped frame dwelling and has difficulty understanding that William Little died there, August 30, 1848, possessed of 112 slaves, a mill, a tanyard in Wadesboro, and stock holdings in banks in both of the Carolinas. His will, dated April 27, 1847, leaves a bequest of several slaves to each of eleven children and his wife Elizabeth. Over twenty-six tracts or parcels of land in various parts of Anson County are mentioned.<sup>20</sup>

William Little's furniture was first recorded in 1955,<sup>21</sup> with two examples illustrated, a tea table (Fig. 8) and a secretary with bookcase (Fig. 6) of the Federal period. A third example, a desk of the Chippendale style, is not now thought to have been made by Little; the style and construction in no way relates to the later Federal examples.



Further, it is believed by this writer that William Little was too well versed in the neoclassical taste and style of construction to have made the desk.



*Figure 2.*

The secretary with bookcase (Fig. 2) is believed to be one of Little's earliest productions in Sneedsbrough. The use of straight bracket feet under a molded base, in combination with a molded top separating the lower and upper sections, reminds us of the turn-of-the-century case pieces fashionable



*Figure 2a. Detail showing open dovetailed joint at cornice.*

---

*Figure 2. Secretary with bookcase, attributed to William Little, walnut with poplar drawer frames, yellow pine elsewhere, brasses replace original knobs. 90 inches high, 46 inches wide, 21 $\frac{7}{8}$  inches deep. Private collection. MESDA research file 2587.*



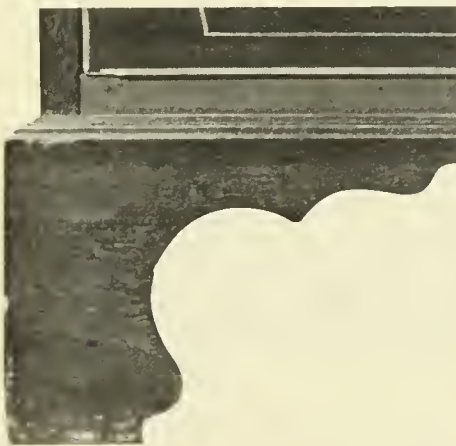
*Figure 3. Chest of drawers, attributed to Charleston, South Carolina, c. 1800, mahogany with white pine interior.  $34\frac{7}{8}$  inches high,  $42\frac{1}{2}$  inches wide,  $23\frac{1}{2}$  inches deep. Charleston Museum, Manigault House. MESDA research file 8043.*

in Charleston when Little was employed there in 1799 (Fig. 3). The Little example and the Charleston example are both constructed in the same fashion; i.e., the top is fastened with screws through stiles which are, in turn, dovetailed to the case sides, and the feet are set with vertical blocks under an extension of the base molding — a typical early Federal style of construction. The foot pattern of the two pieces is remarkably close. The Little example is, however; not one of his more expensively constructed case pieces, making use of native walnut and with a minimum of inlaid stringing. One also notes the open dovetail joint at the cornice ends, this usually covered with vertically grained veneer in his more elaborate cabinets (Fig. 2a).

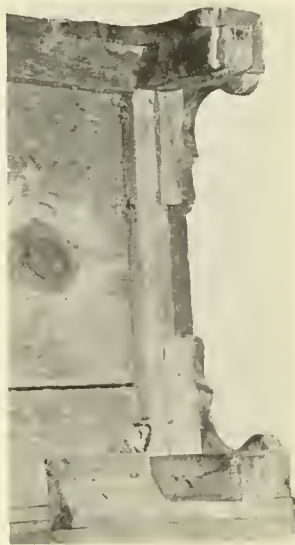




*Figure 4. Chest of drawers, attributed to William Little, mahogany and mahogany veneer with poplar drawer frames, yellow pine elsewhere, original brasses. 37 inches high, 43½ inches wide, 21⅛ inches deep. Private collection. MESDA research file 8322.*



*Figure 4a.  
Detail of straight bracket foot.*

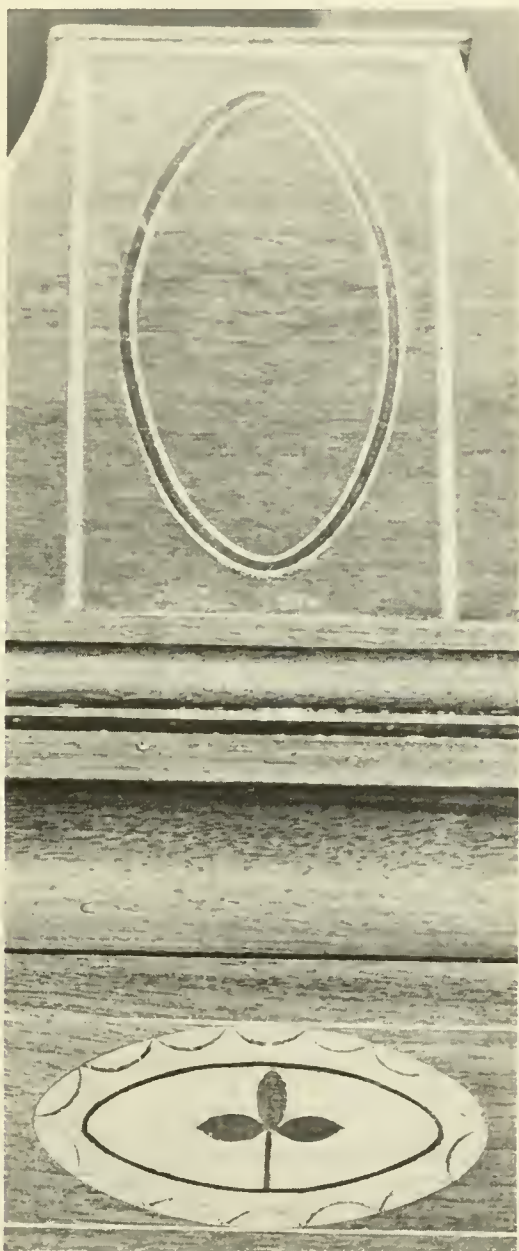


*Figure 4b.  
Detail of foot blocking.*



*Figure 5. Corner cupboard, attributed to William Little, descended in the Pegues family of South Carolina just below Sneedsborough, walnut with poplar interior. 106 inches high, 45-5/16 inches across face, 6 inch returns. Private collection. MESDA research file 8800.*

Of William Little's case pieces, the next in date order, if we are to consider the molded base as a dating tool, would be a chest of drawers (Fig. 4) and a corner cupboard (Fig. 5). While the chest case frame is constructed in the same manner as the secretary (Fig. 2), the top is not molded and is now in a more acceptable Federal style. The use of mahogany in this example, and many others attributed to William Little, is unique to our experience in studying piedmont Carolina furniture. The trouble of obtaining this imported wood must have



*Figure 5a. Detail of inlay in cornice.*





*Figure 6. Secretary with bookcase, attributed to William Little, descended in the Thomas Little family, mahogany and mahogany veneer with yellow pine interior. 96 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches high, 47 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches wide, 22 $\frac{5}{8}$  inches deep. Private collection. MESDA research file 2587.*



given Little a competitive edge over his contemporaries but added considerably to the cost of his furniture. The corner cupboard, of walnut, also with molded base, has a more fashionable cornice than heretofore seen. This form of cornice was, by the time William left England, in common use in the more urban centers of cabinetmaking, and he would certainly have seen examples in Norfolk and Charleston. Thomas Shearer's drawing of this form of cornice, drawn in 1788, first appeared as plate three in *The Cabinet-Makers' London Book of Prices*, published in 1793.

Three key case pieces should be considered next. The secretary with bookcase (Fig. 6) descended from Thomas,



Figure 6a. Interior of secretary.

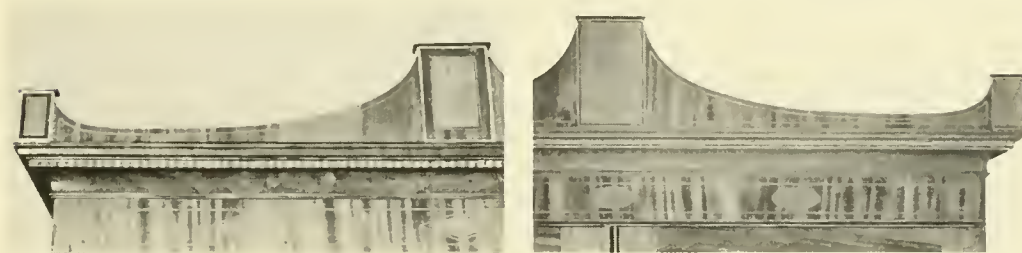
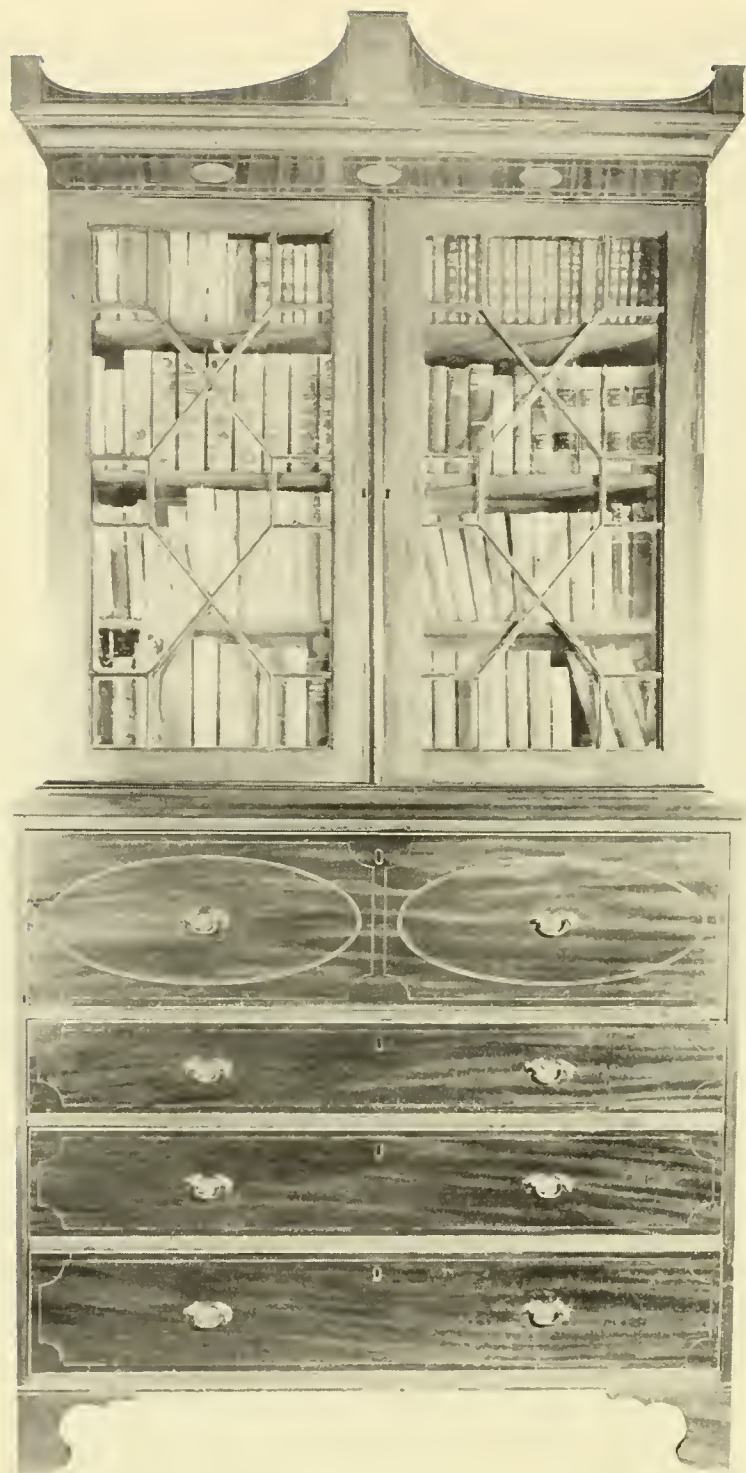


Figure 6b. Details, top of cornice in Figure 6, bottom of cornice in Figure 7.



*Figure 7. Secretary with bookcase, signed William Little, descended from Josiah J. Evans, Society Hill, South Carolina, mahogany and mahogany veneer, walnut secretary interior, with some poplar drawer parts, yellow pine elsewhere in interior, brasses replaced. 94 $\frac{3}{8}$  inches high, 49 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches wide, 22 $\frac{3}{8}$  inches deep. Private collection. MESDA research file 8803.*

William Little's brother, who, we will remember, came to South Carolina in late 1806. A second example (Fig. 7) descended from Josiah J. Evans, of Society Hill, South Carolina. It is marked in pencil with William Little's signature on the bottom of an interior drawer (Fig. 7a) and compares favorably with Little's signature on a letter written many years later.<sup>22</sup> (Fig. 7b). It is the only known example to bear William

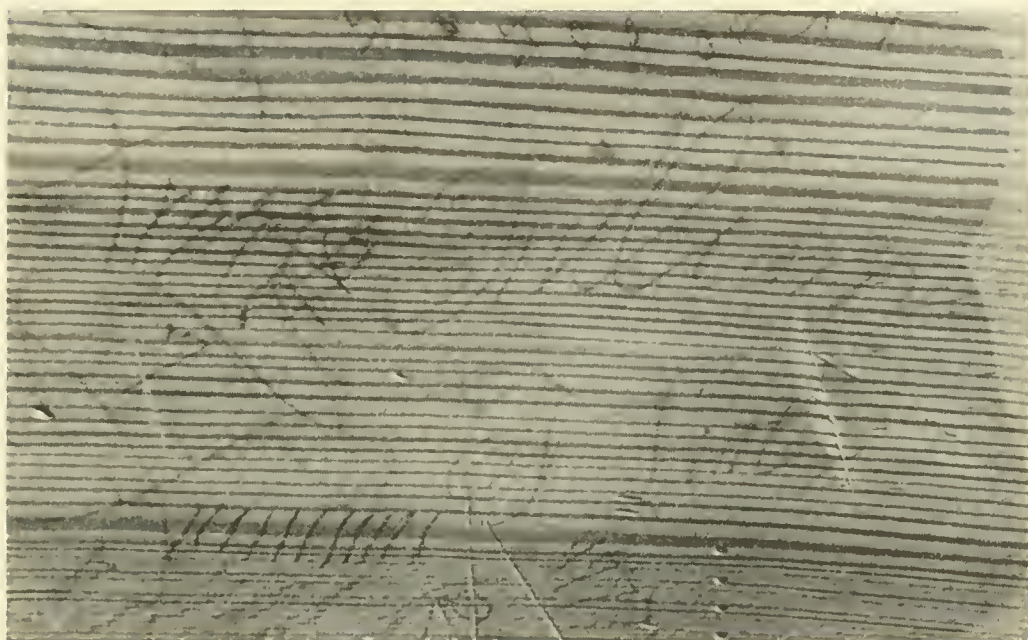


Figure 7a. Drawer bottom, with penciled signature of William Little and other writings, including the letters F preceding William and Little. The signature was written on a board which was subsequently chamfered off for a drawer bottom.

at my dear friend  
 I remain your affectionate  
 uncle  
 William Little

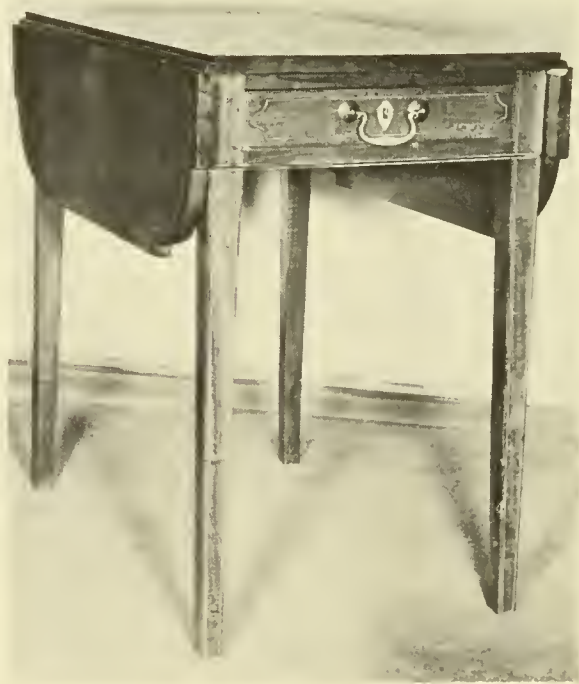
Figure 7b. Signature of William Little on letter to a nephew, November 28, 1845.



Little's signature. The author has been unable to examine a third secretary with bookcase which has descended in William's side of the Little family and which, he was informed, was of the same form as the Thomas Little and Josiah J. Evans examples.

With the exception of the continued use of the straight bracket foot, these two examples have now been updated completely to the Federal style. They are without a base molding. A splayed "French" foot would have been a more acceptable pattern, but one which Little never seems to have used. Both examples together make extensive use of mahogany, and design characteristics such as the pattern of the straight bracket foot, removable cornice, unusual keyhole inlay, and the three-plinth cornice are seen in other examples. Case construction techniques of these two key examples (Figs. 6, 7) match those of all other case pieces, and the drawer construction ties in with the three tables and all case pieces included in this study.

Two other examples attributed to William Little have descended in his family. A cherry tea table (Fig. 8) is the



*Figure 8. Tea table, attributed to and descended from William Little, cherry, with poplar drawer frame, vertical square glueblocks and inner frame, yellow pine drawer bottom and drawer supports, oak outer or gate frame. 29¼ inches high, 28⅞ inches long, 19⅛ inches wide closed, 36¼ inches wide open. Private collection. MESDA research file 1605.*



*Figure 9. Sideboard, attributed to William Little, walnut with poplar drawer frames, yellow pine elsewhere, brasses replace original knobs. The right double drawer is fitted as a cellaret. 38½ inches high, 63⅛ inches long, 24⅛ inches deep. Private collection. MESDA research file 8806.*

only example known to us of that wood. The table, and a sideboard not descending in the Little family (Fig. 9), represent an interesting departure from the inlay of the other Little-attributed case pieces and tables. The stringing extends from the top to the bottom of the legs, omitting a cuff band at the foot, and interrupted by the horizontal stringing at the case base. This is a less expensive method of stringing. While the decoration quality is of a less complicated manner, the construction of the two examples matches those of all the other Little-attributed and signed examples. Both the tea table and the sideboard have the important keyhole inlay "signature" of William Little (Fig. 9a).

The other William Little family example is a unique mahogany tray (Fig. 10) with laminated bent-wood gallery grooved into the tray's molded edge. We know of no other southern example of this form. The tray is also important in introducing an unusual inlay (Fig. 10a) which is related to other designs in two tables (Figs. 11, 12).

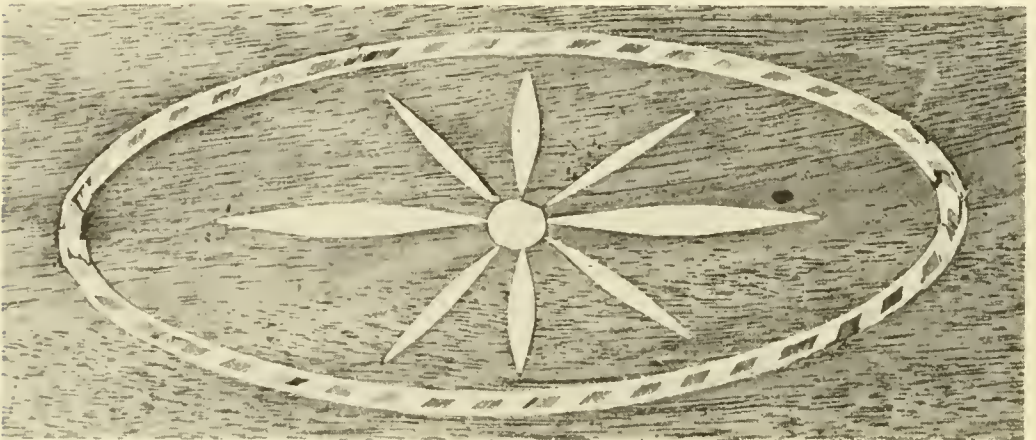
The card table (Fig. 11), of mahogany, descended from General Henry William Harrington, the owner of a plantation just across the Pee Dee River and north of Sneadsborough.



*Figure 9a. Sideboard keyhole inlay.*



*Figure 10. Tray, attributed to and descended from William Little, mahogany.  $1\frac{3}{8}$  inches high,  $30\frac{1}{4}$  inches long,  $17\frac{1}{2}$  inches wide. The gallery is laminated of three pieces. Private Collection. MESDA research file 8808.*



*Figure 10a. Detail of tray inlay.*





*Figure 11. Card table, attributed to William Little, descended from General Henry William Harrington, a close neighbor across the Pee Dee River from Sneedsborough, mahogany and mahogany veneer, with yellow pine interior, oak gate frame. 29 $\frac{7}{8}$  inches high, 36 inches long, 17 $\frac{7}{8}$  inches deep closed. Private collection. MESDA research file 2736.*

The inlaid four-petal design in the top of the legs relates well with that of the tray, while the use of mahogany and the construction relate the card table to the tea table (Fig. 12). The construction of the tea table is identical, in both drawer and frame, to the William Little descended example (Fig. 8).

In summary, one should keep all of the design, inlay, and construction features in mind when attributing furniture to the shop of William Little. Woods include the frequent use of mahogany, rarely found in piedmont furniture. Other primary woods so far found are walnut, cherry and a light wood inlay. Woods found in secondary positions are predominantly yellow pine, with poplar used with some frequency as drawer frames, an occasional case back or inside frame of a table. Oak seems to be the only wood used for the gate frames of tables.





*Figure 12. Tea table, attributed to William Little, mahogany and mahogany veneer with poplar drawer frame and inner table frame, yellow pine drawer bottom and drawer front core, oak gate frame. MESDA collection, loan from James G. Hanes, III. MESDA research file 2618.*

Construction features include feet with vertical grained square blocks, these usually shaped at base to conform to the foot face, and with abutting triangular horizontal blocks often shaped to conform to the upper foot face. The whole foot structure is set under an extension of the base molding. In the later pieces, without base molding, the inlaid base band is used to face the extension under the case. (Fig. 4b).

Drawer bottoms are the common paneled-in form, the bottom grain running parallel to the drawer front and, in large case drawers, a strip glueblocking at the ends, this with saw cuts to permit the drawer bottom to expand and contract. An unusual feature of William Little's construction is the use of yellow pine behind veneered surfaces such as drawer fronts. Yellow pine is stubborn in its expansion, contraction, and warping movements and cannot be controlled by the veneered front as readily as a softer wood such as white pine or poplar. Little's veneered drawer fronts have the grain parallel to the core and have survived in good order.

Bookcase backs have vertical boards. One or two of these have molded edges and are set forward of the others, giving a panelled effect to the back. Tops of case pieces such as chests of drawers are attached with screws through two stiles which are, in turn, dovetailed to the case sides. Little employed dustboards extending about nine inches between the drawers.

Design features include the straight bracket foot so far found on all of Little's case furniture (Fig. 4a). These feet may be set under an extended base molding, presumably in the earlier examples, or under a flush banding of inlay in later pieces. Little's three-plinth cornice, while common to urban coastal furniture, is a rare feature in the piedmont. Secretary interiors have drawers arranged over the pigeonholes, and the brackets are of the constant shape of two ogee curves peaking at the center, with fillet and ovolo terminals (Fig. 6a).

The most common inlay stringing is, of course, a single line, but Little frequently used a triple band of two light lines sandwiching a dark wood. The striped inlay was seldom used (Fig. 10a). His most distinctive inlay, however, was his lobed keyhole escutcheon (Fig. 9a), and the four-petal ornament within a rectangular block at the top of table legs (Fig. 12a). This four-petal ornament, it will be noted, has the vertical petals elongated, and should not be confused with other similar inlays on tables found in Virginia as well as the Carolinas.

Pendants of one-piece bellflowers are found on table legs, and these have the center petal only slightly longer than the flanking petals, separated with dots, and with an elongated device at the base (Figs. 12a, 13). The seven-point variegated star on the Harrington card table (Fig. 11) and the oval



*Figure 12a (Left). Inlay detail.*

*Figure 13. Inlay detail, tea table. Private collection. MESDA research file 6420.*



patera with flower on the Pegues corner cupboard (Fig. 5a) are rare and cannot yet be said to be typical of Little's work. His inlays are unadorned with shading or scratched decoration.

When Little employed a cuff inlay at the foot of a leg it is usually rather low in proportion to the foot or the remainder of the leg. This may partially account for the stubby look to the proportions of the tapered leg, but actually it should also be noted that the taper is less than usual for the period.

William Little brought a fresh breeze of English tradition into the furniture making of piedmont Carolina. His success as a cabinetmaker dominated the market for locally made cabinetwork for a radius of at least twenty-five miles of Sneedsborough. No other group of so many examples can be attributed to another shop in that area. And yet his skill and success as a cabinetmaker were only stepping-stones to a greater financial success in agriculture. The pattern of the artisan turning to agriculture was not uncommon in both urban and rural societies of the South — its vestiges remain as an economic strength in the piedmont South today.

*Mr. Horton is Senior Research Fellow at the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts.*

## NOTES

1. Virginia Horne, "Genealogy of the Little Family of Anson and Richmond Counties," *The Littles of Carlisle* (undated), unnumbered pages.
2. O. McRae Covington, *The Littles of Carlisle* (undated), unnumbered pages, letter, George Little, Marlsgate, England, to William Little, "Cabinetmaker / Sneedsborough Anson County / North Carolina America," July 13, 1805, received November, 1805.
3. *Ibid.*, letter, James and Mary Todd (sister to William), Malsburg near Carlisle, to William Little, March 10, 1827, received August 5, 1827, in which James reminds William of the "Delightfull Days when you lived at Cargo."
4. *Ibid.*, letter, John Little (brother of William), Rountree, Cumberland County, England, to William Little, August 10, 1828, received October 26, 1828, in which John writes "it is a long time now since you sailed from sherlds for America the last time I saw you it is just Thirty years since July the 24th Last past. . . ."

5. *Ibid.*, receipt, Robert Roberson, agent for William Johnston, merchant of Norfolk, Virginia, New Castle-on-Tyne, to William Little, July 26, 1798. New Castle-on-Tyne is just up the river from South Shields.
6. *Ibid.*, letter, Ann Gillesby (cousin of William), London, December 23, 1799.
7. Milby E. Burton, *Charleston Furniture 1700-1825* (1955), p. 102.
8. *City Gazette & The Daily Advertiser*, Charleston, South Carolina, August 22, 1796, p. 2.
9. Covington, *op.cit.*, letter, William Gillesby, Charleston, to William Little, Sneedsborough, N.C., April 12, 1800, in which he writes: "I only recd thy two Letters—one of them dated Jan 31st the other March 7th they both informing me thou was settled."
10. *Ibid.*, letter, George Little, Marlsgate, England, to William Little, July 13, 1805, received November 1805, in which he asks "What use do you make of that Neger that you Bought at Charlestown."
11. Anson County, N.C., *Deed Book H-2*, p. 285.
12. Anson County, N.C., *Deed Book O*, p. 70, deed, July 13, 1812, John King to William Little, for \$27, lots numbers 12, 28, 44, 60, except those parts extending across Huckleberry Creek. Little also owned, as recorded at *Deed Book S*, p. 82, lots numbers 143 and 144 on southwest corner of Cabarrus and Grove Streets. This deed is one in which Little sold the lots 143 and 144 to Samuel Knox for \$100, January 23, 1817.
13. Covington, *op.cit.*, account memo, November 29, 1802, crossed out, probably to indicate that the account was paid. Robert Troy was a trustee of the Wadesborough Academy, chartered in 1802, and a member of the state House of Commons for Anson County.
14. *Ibid.*, letter, Robert J. Steel, Cheraw, S.C., to William Little, Sneedsborough, January 25, 1803. The Steel family was also from the Carlisle area of England. There is mention in a letter, George Little, Marlsgate, England, to William Little, January 18, 1806, received April 18, 1806, that "Mr. Steals Mother is very well in hiltb but turning an old woman but holds well out. Thomas [Little, brother of William] will leve hir 2 or 3 Guineas acording to Mr. Steals request. . . ."
15. Horne, *op.cit.*, unnumbered page.
16. Covington, *op.cit.*, letter, George Little, Marlsgate, England, to William Little, Sneedsborough, February 26, 1807. Thomas Little had immigrated to America, landing in Charleston in late 1806.
17. *Ibid.*, letter, George Little, Marlsgate, England, to William Little, "Cabinetmaker, Sneedsborough," June 28, 1810; and letter George Little, Brampton Townfoot, England, to William Little, Sneeds-

borough, December 14, 1815, received May 7, 1816; and letter, George Little, Brampton Townfoot to William Little, Sneedsborough, March 30, 1819, received June 30, 1819.

18. Anson County, N.C., *Deed Book S*, p. 82, October 29, 1817, deed from Shadrack Denson to William Little, for \$500, 200 acres on Morris Branch of Jones Creek; p. 193, November 1, 1817, deed from Alexander McRae to William Little, for \$1,100, land in two tracts of 147 and 58½ acres on north side of south prong of Jones Creek; and p. 201, November 1, 1817, deed from Charles Vivion to William Little, for \$1,300, three tracts of 250 acres on south prong of Jones Creek, 183 acres on Morris Branch of Jones Creek, and 9 acres on waters of Jones Creek, for total of 442 acres purchased from Vivion. Other purchases followed that year as well as in 1821, 1823, 1827, 1828, and 1829, all on Jones Creek.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 421, February 11, 1818, which deed to Thomas Crawford indicates that lots 69, 70, 71, and 72 (the homeplace lots) were adjacent, at the southwest corner, to lots 12, 23, 44, and 60. P. 82, January 23, 1817, deed from William Little to Samuel Knox, for \$100, lots 143 and 144. There is a Chippendale style desk and bookcase known to be inscribed on an interior drawer "Samuel Knox, his hand May 16th 1799," and which descended in the Knox family of Anson County. No proof is known that Knox was a cabinetmaker.
20. Anson County, N.C., *Will Book B*, pp. 237-243, will dated April 27, 1847, proved in October court, 1848.
21. Florence Q. Stanback, "A North Carolina cabinetmaker, 1775-1848," *Antiques*, June 1955, pp. 506-507.
22. Covington, *op.cit.*, letter, William Little, Wadesborough, N.C., to nephew, November 28, 1845.

William John Coffee, Sculptor-Painter:  
His Southern Experience

BRADFORD L. RAUSCHENBERG

*. . . A Sculptor lately from England and  
really able in his art.*

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the desire for portrait sculpture had been firmly established in the South. In 1770 Charleston, South Carolina had been graced with Wilton's replica of William Pitt,<sup>1</sup> and in 1773 Richard Hayward's Lord Botetourt had arrived in Williamsburg, Virginia.<sup>2</sup> Houdon received a commission from the Virginia legislature in 1781 for a bust of Lafayette, and in 1784 he was commissioned to sculpt the full length figure of George Washington.<sup>3</sup> By the close of the eighteenth century sculpture still glorified only public heroes and was affordable to the few. The largest private collection of sculpture in the South was probably at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello near Charlottesville, Virginia. It was through Jefferson that William John Coffee, a little known sculptor, was encouraged to come to Virginia. His art produced sculptures of heroes as well as of lesser known figures in southern society.

William John Coffee was born in the Lambeth area of London about 1774. In his youth he was employed at Coade's Artificial Stone Manufactory in Lambeth as a chore boy and kilnman. In 1793 or 1794 he moved to Derby to work at the Derby Porcelain Factory. It was here that Coffee was first



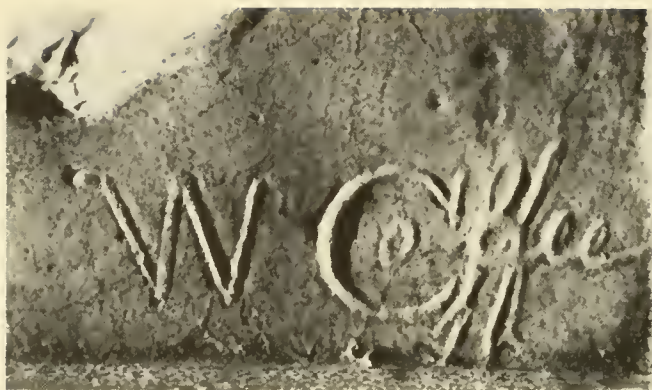
acknowledged in the records as a repairer-modeller by being paid per figure or per day.<sup>4</sup> In 1795 his wages were raised to reflect his accomplishments. Work sometimes attributed to Coffee was often actually by his fellow worker J. J. Spangler.<sup>5</sup> It was at this time, however, that Spangler left Derby, and Coffee soon followed. The newly opened pottery of Sir Nigel Gresley at Church Gresley, Burton on Trent, Staffordshire, attracted Coffee for employment.<sup>6</sup> After only a year, however, he returned to the Derby Porcelain Factory for two years of work. In 1798 he left to establish his own factory with William Duesbury, a relative of Duesbury, the Derby proprietor, in London. Duesbury soon returned to the Derby Porcelain Factory, leaving Coffee to continue producing china, terra cotta ornaments, and figurines.<sup>7</sup>

The Royal Academy of Arts in London exhibited Coffee's models of animals in 1808, 1811, and 1816 (Figs. 1, 1a). In 1801 his address was 32 Stanhope Street, London, but in 1808 no address was given, and by 1810 he was back in Derby, where he was identified as a modeller and sculptor.<sup>8</sup>

The *Derby Mercury* of June 2, 1814, contained evidence of another of Coffee's artistic talents.



Figure 1. Dog figure, Derby (?), biscuit porcelain, modelled by William John Coffee. Private collection.



*Figure 1a. Detail of signature on left rear top.*

## ILLUMINATION

MR. COFFEE

(Having just returned from London)

Respectfully begs leave to offer his services to the Ladies and Gentlemen of Derby etc. in the preparation of transparent Paintings for the approaching illuminations. He has prepared a variety of Allegorical and Patriotic Designs for the occasion which with specimens of their execution may be inspected at his home in the Friar Gate.

N.B. Two apprentices wanted; Boys from the country will be preferred, with whom a small premium will be expected.

Derby May 17, 1814<sup>9</sup>

Exhibiting for the last time in London in 1816, Coffee entered "a portrait of a sitter [setter?], the property of M. Allam, esq. of Derby; Terra-cotta."<sup>10</sup> At this point he evidently saw America as a land of opportunity and sailed for New York.

In 1817 the American Academy of the Fine Arts in New York exhibited several examples of Coffee's work: "'Infant Morpheus', four dogs, a cow, sheep," and a new side of his talents, "Two paintings of dead game."<sup>11</sup> Coffee was in New York in May, 1817, but probably not established with a residence, as he was not listed in New York City directories until 1819.<sup>12</sup> Thus one could assume that the 1817 exhibition was of examples produced in England.

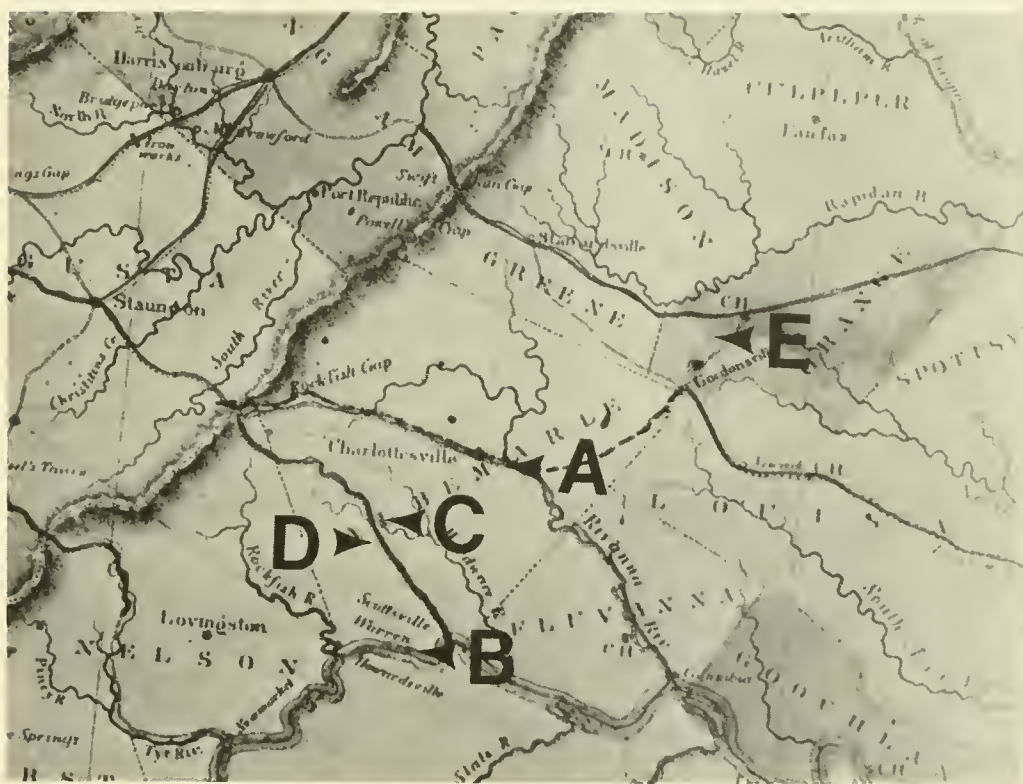


Figure 2. Map showing location of Albemarle and Orange Counties of Virginia, with detail locating homes represented by busts extant or where they were commissioned.

- a. Monticello
- b. Mount Warren
- c. Estouteville
- d. Enniscorthy
- e. Montpelier

The scale is approximately fifteen miles between a and b. The map is a detail of *A Map of the Internal Improvements of Virginia*, published by C. Crozet, 1848.



In his diary, DeWitt Clinton (1769-1828), governor of New York, recorded May 12, 1817 "sat at the [illegible] for Coffee the Sculpter." Seven days later he entered: "Sat 5th time to Sculpter." There is now a bust, 30 inches high and of plaster, in the New York Historical Society of Clinton attributed to Coffee.<sup>13</sup> The Clinton diary was the first mention of Coffee's working in America.

By mid-to-late 1817 Coffee contacted Thomas Jefferson, either from New York or Richmond, Virginia, and by March 4, 1818, he had visited Monticello in Albemarle County (a, Fig. 2), secured a commission for busts, and returned to New York. There undoubtedly had been much socializing at Monticello, for further in Coffee's letter he informed Jefferson that he would again be visiting for "Two or three days and will have two glasses of good wine every day after dinner. . . ."<sup>14</sup> Coffee arrived later in April and probably delivered the completed busts of Thomas Jefferson, his daughter Mrs. Thomas Mann Randolph (nee Martha Jefferson), and granddaughter, Ellen. An entry in Jefferson's account book on April 14th notes "that on the 12th inst. I omitted to enter my draught on James Leitch [a local factor] for 105 D[ollars] in favr of Mr. Coffee a sculpter. This is to pay for the originals of 3 busts, to wit, Mrs. Randolph, Ellen's and mine. I bespoke of him 12 copies of Mrs. R's @ 5 D. each and one of Mr. Madison's, if he makes it." None of these busts are known today.<sup>15</sup>

Conjecture is that during the fall of 1817 Coffee actually "took" or sculptured the three busts in terra cotta at Monticello. Coffee then took the bisque busts to his studio in New York, where they were fired to around 800°F.<sup>16</sup> The transportation of unfired or "leather-hard" terra cotta was made easy by the fineness of the clay used. Coffee probably brought his own clay in powder form to Virginia. Mixing the clay to his desired consistency, he would then cut away clay to form the bust. When complete it would be removed from the stand or platform, the base finished and freed of excess clay. The column would be hollowed to allow moisture to escape, thus reducing the chance of cracking during firing (Fig. 8b). The bust would then be air dried and packed for shipment to New York via Richmond.

In his New York studio Coffee would make a mold of plaster of paris around the lightly oiled unfired terra cotta



bust. Plaster busts were then cast from the mold. A comparison made between the terra cotta and plaster busts of the same subjects revealed that the terra cotta measured only one-fourth inch smaller than the plaster examples.

After drying, the plaster busts were tooled and the column hollowed (Fig. 9b), and the exterior painted. Several of the plaster busts found have been white, with subsequent coats of plaster over the peeling original white coat.<sup>17</sup>

With this as the probable method of Coffee's bust production, an understanding of the mobility of his "models" can today be more easily accepted.

In April, 1818, Jefferson wrote a letter of introduction for Coffee to James Madison at Montpelier in Orange County, Virginia (e, Fig. 2):

Mr. Coffee the bearer of this letter is a Sculptor lately from England, and really able in his art. he makes busts in plaister or terra cotta he came from Richmond to take you[r] bust and mine and gives less trouble than any artist painter or sculptor I have ever submitted myself to. . . .

Jefferson concludes the letter: "I join him therefore in soliciting your indulging him and your friends in setting for him."<sup>18</sup>

Evidently the introduction was convincing, for on July 14, 1818, Coffee submitted a bill of \$105 to Madison "for the modelling of three Busts viz One of himself [James Madison], one of Mrs. Madison and one of Mr. Todd."<sup>19</sup>

While at Monticello Coffee was the subject of a May 18 letter from Jefferson to John Adams in which he wrote that "there is now here a Mr. Coffee, a sculptor and Englishman, who has just taken my bust. . . . He is a fine artist. He takes them about half the size of life in plaster."<sup>20</sup> There is no evidence that Adams ever engaged Coffee.

By September 18, 1818, Coffee was back in New York residing on Greenwich Street. He wrote Jefferson regarding some implements he had left in Virginia while employed by Jefferson, Madison, and perhaps others.<sup>21</sup> Regarding the same inquiry, Coffee wrote again that month about some crates or "boxes containing my Laboures [terra cotta busts or 'models']" and asked Jefferson to send them to him in New York.<sup>22</sup>

Coffee wrote Jefferson from New York the following January proposing that he had "a great desire to model a small whole length statue of Mr. Jefferson two feet 6 in high. On my own account for subscription at 30 Dollars per statue to be in White Plaster . . ." and further to "model and compleat in white Plaster a full life size statue of Mr. J. to be executed from a small model taken from the life. The work to be executed in this City or in London." Coffee suggested that this full length statue should be placed in the rotunda, then under construction at the University of Virginia. The statue, he proposed, could be financed by subscription of fifty names in Virginia, at a cost of \$400. Apparently no one else was as encouraged as Coffee, for nothing else of these proposals is known.

In December, 1819, Coffee wrote Jefferson informing him of the shipment of "the models in Terra Cotta" and stressed that they be opened only at Monticello.<sup>24</sup> This, no doubt, would be the three original terra cotta busts, now fired and finished. Coffee wrote further in January "informing you [Jefferson] that I have at last finished my labours with regard to those models in terra Cotta which your taste in the Fine Arts has done me the Honour to patronize. . . ."<sup>25</sup> Though this shipment was made in December, delivery was probably not until late February or March, as we find an entry in Jefferson's *Journal*, March 18, 1820, for "pd Wm. J. Coffee for busts 65 D[ollars]. ante Apr. 4-18."<sup>26</sup> The "ante Apr. 4-18" refers to the earlier payment of \$105 for the three original terra cotta busts, and now Jefferson was paying \$65 for the twelve copies of Mrs. Randolph's and one copy of Madison's bust which he had also ordered.

That the Madison bust was made is further attested by a note dated Monticello, May 3, 1820, in which Coffee called Madison's attention to his "small acct. which I shall be much favored by receiving in a few days when I shall call on my way home [to New York]." The visit to Montpelier was apparently made, and on May 25th Coffee recorded payment of \$50.75 "being in full for models [terra cotta] and busts [plaster] made for" the Madisons.<sup>27</sup> None of the Madison busts are known today.<sup>28</sup>

William Coffee's January letter also asked Jefferson to notify his grandchildren, "Mr. [Thomas Jefferson] Randolph and Mrs. Bankhead [nee Anne Cary Randolph] as to the tenor

of the letter . . .,” and he further noted that “In one of the Cases are two Busts of Mr. Jefferson Randolph one of which I have the pleasure of requesting Mrs. Randolph’s acceptance. . . .”



*Figure 3. Terra cotta bust, 1818-19, of Mrs. Charles Bankhead (nee Anne Cary Randolph), of Collie, Albemarle County, Virginia, a granddaughter of Jefferson. 12½ inches high, 8¼ inches wide. Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation. MESDA research file S-8611.*

*Figure 3a. Left profile.*

It is apparent from this that when Coffee visited Virginia in April, 1818, busts were taken of Thomas Jefferson’s grandchildren, with the exception of Ellen, whose bust had been taken on Coffee’s first visit in late 1817. Of these busts taken in 1818, and perhaps the nature of Coffee’s “Laboures” of the September 26, 1818, letter, only those of Mrs. Charles Bankhead (Figs. 3, 3a) and Miss Cornelia Jefferson Randolph (Figs. 4, 4a), both in terra cotta, survive.





*Figure 4. Terra cotta bust, 1818-19, of Miss Cornelia Jefferson Randolph, daughter of Martha Jefferson and Thomas Mann Randolph of Tuckahoe. As a child she lived at Monticello, later at Edgehill. 13½ inches high, 8¼ inches wide. Private collection. MESDA research file S-8564.*

*Figure 4a. Left profile.*

Jefferson probably introduced Coffee to other friends, and they were encouraged to commission busts. A few examples survive, and that of Mrs. Wilson Cary Nicholas (Figs. 5, 5a), the wife of the Governor of Virginia, is closely associated with Jefferson. Their daughter, Jane Nicholas, married Thomas Jefferson Randolph, grandson of Jefferson. The Nicholas home, Mount Warren, stood just south of Charlottesville, west of Scottsville and on the James River (b, Fig. 2).

Four busts of the Coles family survive:<sup>29</sup> John Coles III<sup>30</sup> (Fig. 6) of Estouteville (c, Fig. 2), Mrs. John Coles II<sup>31</sup> (Fig. 7) of Enniscorthy (d, Fig. 2), Isaac A. Coles<sup>32</sup> (Figs. 8, 8a, 8b), who was Thomas Jefferson's secretary and who lived with his brother Walter Coles (Figs. 9, 9a, 9b), at Enniscorthy.

Jefferson also wrote a letter of introduction for Coffee to Thomas Cooper,<sup>33</sup> a friend later invited to become professor





Figure 5. Terra cotta bust, 1818-19, of Mrs. Wilson Cary Nicholas (nee Margaret Smith), of Mount Warren, Albemarle County, Virginia. 12 $\frac{7}{8}$  inches high, 8 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches wide. Private collection. MESDA research file S-8565.

Figure 5a. Detail of head.

of chemistry at the University of Virginia, a position which, because of politics, Cooper declined. We do not know of a bust of this subject. Cooper later became the president of the South Carolina College.<sup>34</sup>

One other southern venture into portrait sculpture was made by William Coffee in the spring of 1821 when he sought commissions in Charleston, South Carolina. A letter from the South Carolina sculptor John S. Cogdell to the artist Samuel F. B. Morse, April 14, 1821, discussed Coffee's presentation to the South Carolina Academy of Fine Arts of "Two Casts One of Genl. C.C. [Charles Cotesworth] (Fig. 10), the other of GL. T [Thomas] Pinckney (Fig. 11) and a Medallion of Mr. Poinsetti. . . ."<sup>35</sup> The medallion is unknown today; it represented Joel R. Poinsetti (1779-1851), a commercial agent to South America, a scientist and a politician of Charleston.



*Figure 6. Terra cotta bust, 1818-19, of John Coles III, of Estouteville, Albemarle County, Virginia. 13¼ inches high, 8¼ inches wide. Private collection. MESDA research file S-8582.*

*Figure 6a. Left profile.*

When Cogdell visited Coffee working in Charleston he was informed that the Academy there would be sent a bust of Thomas Jefferson.<sup>36</sup>

Although Coffee succeeded in having the Pinckneys and Mr. Poinsetti sit for their portraits, his success in Charleston was less than desired. He solicited Charles Cotesworth Pinckney to recommend him to others, and Pinckney's answer revealed that "the taste for the Fine Arts has not yet made so much progress among us as I could wish; for I have spoken to several of our Men of Influence to sit to you for their Busts, but they all refuse. . . ."<sup>37</sup> Coffee was back in New York by November 7, 1821, and this ended, as far as we now know, his work as a portrait sculptor in the South.



*Figure 7. Terra cotta bust, 1818-19, of Mrs. John Coles II (Rebecca Elizabeth Tucker), of Enniscorthy, Albemarle County, Virginia. 11 $\frac{7}{8}$  inches high, 7 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches wide. Private collection. MESDA research file S-8625.*

Coffee did not, however, relinquish his valuable contact with Thomas Jefferson. It has been noted earlier that he exhibited oil paintings upon his first coming to America. He utilized this talent in soliciting of Jefferson a commission to clean and revarnish, at a reduced price of three dollars a day for an estimated fifty days, Jefferson's paintings.<sup>38</sup> He again requested this employment upon his return from Charleston but was again put off with the word that anything done to the Monticello paintings would have to be done there in Virginia. Coffee, of course, invited himself to visit if Jefferson would pay the travel expenses.<sup>39</sup> Jefferson finally accepted the visit for the winter to have his paintings cleaned.<sup>40</sup>

Another earlier hint of Coffee's activity in painting was made in a letter about a "case of paintings" Coffee was having



sent to New York by way of Richmond.<sup>41</sup> These could have been paintings to be repaired and cleaned or works of his own.

Still another facet of William Coffee's skill was revealed in connection with his visits to Monticello. As early as September, 1820, Coffee wrote Jefferson that the "ornaments for Bedford House, as well as the ornaments for the University . . ." would be shipped by the end of September. At this date Coffee was in Newark, New Jersey, to escape the heat and "stinking Pestilential City."<sup>42</sup> Poplar Forest, or "Bedford House," was Jefferson's retreat in Bedford County, Virginia.<sup>43</sup> Coffee was evidently engaged in contract work to make ornaments for architectural elements both inside and outside Poplar Forest and the university then being built.

This architectural work was still progressing two years later when Coffee visited Jefferson during the winter of 1821-



*Figure 8. Terra cotta bust, 1818-19, of Isaac A. Coles, of Enniscorthy, Albemarle County, Virginia. 13½ inches high, 8¾ inches wide. Private collection. MESDA research file S-8583.*





*Figure 8a. Left profile.*



*Figure 8b. Rear view.*

22. Coffee arrived on December 31 and was still at Monticello in February, as Jefferson revealed in a letter to Mr. Brockenbrough, the first proctor of the university; Coffee was to visit the university so "that he may see for what [price] he can do the ornaments in the frises in some of the best room."<sup>44</sup>

The result of this visit was revealed in a letter to Jefferson from Coffee in New York, June 25, 1822. Evidently the job of casting ornaments was underpriced to the university, as Coffee was asking \$200 more. He was having lead ornaments cast at a New York foundry, and each ornament required special treatment. The work for the Bedford house was still progressing. The ornaments were to be for "two rooms at Bedford one as in the North [illegible] Portico at Monticello the other as in your dining room in which case it would be the human bust alone in one entablature and in the other



*Figure 9. Plaster bust, 1818-19, of Walter (?) Coles, of Enniscorthy, Albemarle County, Virginia. 13¼ inches high, 9 inches wide. Private collection. MESDA research file S-8580.*

*Figure 9a. Left profile.*



*Figure 9b. Rear view.*



Figure 10 (left). Plaster bust, 1821, of General Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, Charleston, South Carolina. 24 inches high. Present location unknown. Photo courtesy of Gibbes Art Gallery, Charleston, by permission of College of Charleston.

Figure 11. Plaster bust, 1821, of General Thomas Pinckney, Charleston, South Carolina. Unknown dimensions. Present location unknown. Photo courtesy of Gibbes Art Gallery, Charleston, by permission of College of Charleston.

entablature alternately an ox scull and Pateras as in *Galledeos Dorce*.”<sup>45</sup>

Jefferson’s July 10 answer discussed the ornaments at the pavilion of the university and also noted that “in my middle room at Poplar Forest, I mean to mix the faces and ox-sculls a fancy which I can indulge in my own use, altho in a public work I feel bound to follow authority [design books] strictly.”<sup>46</sup>

In January, 1823, Coffee wrote Jefferson informing him that “on the 15th of last month I shipped in good order and in duple cases the whole of your ornaments for Bedford House. . . .” There was also news that all of the “Enrichments for the University, . . . are contained in the same vessel called the Schooner Rising States.” He concluded the letter with a detailed discussion of how best to apply the ornaments and



later billed Jefferson with \$99.27 for the shipment for Poplar Hall.<sup>47</sup>

The work for the university continued over a period of years. In March, 1823, Coffee wrote of his trial of "burnt clay" ornaments for the rotunda in place of lead which he supplied for the Bedford house,<sup>48</sup> and correspondence from March to May indicated a strained relationship developed between the two men over matters of cost and shipping. As late as 1825, however, when plans were being made to open the university, Coffee was still corresponding with Jefferson and Brockenbrough about ornaments. Suffice to say, much of Coffee's ornamental work at Monticello and the university survived to tell of Jefferson's taste and of Coffee's talents.<sup>49</sup>

In January, 1824, Jefferson approached his friend to ask if he knew of a good "drawing master in the military or landscape line for the University. . . ."<sup>50</sup> Coffee was quick to reply and asked Jefferson to inquire at the university about a position for him to teach painting. He wrote that he intended a fall visit to Virginia for "the purpose of painting Portraits," and that he was "middlingly acquainted . . . to ornament the walls of houses in General. I also intend to give instruction in the art of Painting to those Ladies and Gentlemen that may have a taste that way. . . ."<sup>51</sup> Evidently nothing materialized concerning this, for September found Coffee still in New York inquiring about his being commissioned to "paint in oil a Picture of the University as a Landscape which would make a good Picture." Further, he suggested a subscription for prints from the paintings.<sup>52</sup> Again, his proposal fell on deaf ears. Coffee was listed as a portrait painter of "Carmine [Street] N. Bedford" in New York City from 1824 to 1827;<sup>53</sup> since it was for such a long period, he must have had some competency in that form of art.

Coffee still clung to the idea of teaching at the University of Virginia, however, and his letter to Jefferson in December, 1825, told of his desires and talents:

Honbl Sir

Seeing in one of the Prints of the day a strange account of a very strange adventure you of late unfortunately have undergone with a strange man [John H. Browere] calling him self a sculptor, because he



has had the presumption to try to make five Busts of some distinguished Gentlemen — as if like fair Painting, making Busts constituted the necessary requisite for a great artist. But this man, this Sign Painter, ought to have known as he has been in Italy, that moulding a living mans face is not the way to obtain a good characteristick likeness [as] . . . the feature[s] alter under the operation and then recourse must be had to Nature to corect those errors. But this is not my business, wat I presume to trouble you with is in consequence of an Idea that has grown out of the same advertisement.

That you intend to unite the University an artist in the Landscape line. you have some knowledge of my poor abilitys as an artist still you have not seen the whole extent of my powers that way. by a preponderating part, of my trifling knowledge as an artist, or in fact have I even been able in this country to show them, they have slept in Peace, . . . now Sir you will perceive in an instant that I mean to ask of you whether my service would be thought sufficient to enable me by teaching the arts to enable me to obtain about 300 dollars per year.

I paint Landscape and Portraits tolerable well. [illegible] still lifes [illegible] very well and as to modeling and cuting Busts in Marble I have had great Practice in and have the power of Modeling the figure. The animal and Every kind of ornament with Ease and Pleasure.

I hope you will Pardon me for saying so much of my self. I assure you I feel ashamed but I thought it necessary on this occasion to enable you to favour me with your good opinion on this point should your time and condecension permit you.

Honbl Sir

You know I am  
truly your obt sert  
W. J. Coffee<sup>54</sup>

This evidently was the last correspondence between Jefferson and Coffee, for on July 4, 1826, the Virginia patron of

the arts died, and so did Coffee's valuable Virginia contact and friend.

William John Coffee continued his career in the northern cities of New York, Albany and Newark, and here remain a few examples of his sculpture work.<sup>55</sup> Of these, several are signed and are the only such American works known. None of his oil paintings have been identified, though he often spoke of them, and oils were exhibited from time to time. He died, probably at Albany, c. 1846,<sup>56</sup> ending the life of one of the first sculptors to work in the South. His work ranks well among others of his period and can be enjoyed today through the few surviving examples.

*Mr. Rauschenberg is Research Fellow at the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts.*

## NOTES

1. Wayne Craven, *Sculpture in America* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1968), pp. 47-49, Fig. 2.1. Joseph Wilton (1722-1803) sculptured a marble William Pitt, Earl of Chatham for New York. A replica was ordered by the House of Commons in South Carolina and arrived before the New York sculpture. This may be seen today in Washington Park in Charleston, South Carolina.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50, Fig. 2.2.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52, Fig. 2.3. See also H. H. Arnason, *Sculpture by Houdon* (Worcester: Worcester Art Museum, 1964), pp. 81-91.
4. Franklin A. Barrett and Arthur L. Thorpe, *Derby Porcelain, 1750-1848* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), pp. 50-52, 86. Also see Timothy Clifford, "Derby Biscuit," *English Ceramic Circle* (Chatham: W & J. Mackay & Co., Ltd., 1969), Vol. 7, part 2, pp. 111, 116.
5. Timothy Clifford, "J. J. Spangler, a virtuoso Swiss modeller at Derby," *The Connoisseur* (London: the National Magazine Company, Ltd., June 1978), Vol. 198, No. 196, pp. 147-155.
6. F. Brayshaw Gilhespy, "Joseph Lygo's Letters to Derby," *The English Ceramic Circle* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1955), Vol. 3, part 4, p. 208. Also the Derby Public Library, Derby, England, has relevant letters, two of which are dated January 4 & 6, 1795, between William Duesbury, proprietor of the Derby Porcelain Factory, and William Coffee, and which reveal the circumstances of Coffee's leaving. Other letters are in the Derby Public Library

- collection, dated June and December, 1794, between Duesbury and Joseph Lygo, the London agent for Derby, and Charles King, a manager of the factory, about the poor quality of Coffee's work.
7. Barrett and Thorp, *op. cit.*, p. 86.
  8. Personal communication with Mr. David Fraser, Keeper of Art, Derby City Council Museums and Art Gallery, Derby, England, May 2, 1978.
  9. *Ibid.* Celebrations of peace were started June 14, 1814.
  10. *Ibid.*
  11. George C. Groce and David H. Wallace, *The New York Historical Society's Dictionary of Artists in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), p. 135. Also George C. Groce, "William John Coffee, Long Lost Sculptor," *American Collector* (New York: Collector's Publishing Co., 1946), May, pp. 14-15.
  12. Anna Wells Rutledge, "William John Coffee as a Portrait Sculptor," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* (New York: Wildenstein, 1945), Vol. 28, November, pp. 297-312.
  13. The New York Historical Society, *Catalogue of American Portraits in the New York Historical Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), Vol. 1, p. 147, pictures the Clinton bust; David McNeely Stauffer, *American Engravers upon Copper and Steel* (New York: the Grolier Club, 1907), Part II, p. 99, No. 569, pictures a small circular engraving inscribed "W.J.Coffee fecit / A.B. Durand sc. / Printed by Wm. Neal, N.Y."
  14. Library of Congress Microfilm records M817, Thomas Jefferson Miscellanies #5290 DLC, Manuscripts Department, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia, letter, March 4, 1818. Hereafter referred to as 5290 DLC.
  15. *Ibid.*, Jefferson's Account Book. A plaster bust of Jefferson, often attributed to Coffee, is by Peter Cardell, an Italian who cast plaster busts from modellings. See William Dunlap, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1969), Vol. II, part 2, p. 468. Cardell evidently destroyed his original terra cotta model and made a plaster "master" which he called "the plaster original." See Alfred L. Bush, "The Life Portraits of Thomas Jefferson," *Jefferson and the Arts: an Extended View* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1976), pp. 88-91.
  16. Personal communication with Dr. Bernard M. Watney, Hamstead, London, England, July 3, 1978, regarding firing temperature of terra cotta. He relates that a brick kiln would be high enough temperature for terra cotta, but not a bake oven.
  17. Telephone conversation with Mr. Gardner Gidley, Clemmons, North Carolina, a practicing terra cotta sculptor, August 31, 1978.

18. 5290 DLC, *op. cit.*, letter, April 11, 1818. Evidently Coffee came originally to Virginia to take the busts of Jefferson and Madison.
19. Conover Hunt-Jones, *Dolly and the "great little Madison,"* (Washington: American Institute of Architects Foundation, 1977), p. 83. The "Mr. Todd" is John Payne Todd, born 1792. He was Dolly Payne Todd's son by her previous marriage to John Todd.
20. Alfred L. Bush, "The Life Portraits of Thomas Jefferson," *Jefferson and the Arts: An Extended View* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1976), p. 86.
21. Rutledge, *op.cit.*, p. 299, lists Coffee as only in the New York City directories from 1819. Groce, *op.cit.*, p. 15 cites letter regarding implements.
22. 5290 DLC, *op.cit.*, letter, September 26, 1818.
23. *Ibid.*, letter, January 25, 1819.
24. *Ibid.*, letter, December 19, 1819. Here Coffee is using the term "model" to mean the unfired terra cotta. Apparently he interchanges the term.
25. *Ibid.*, letter, January 5, 1820.
26. *Ibid.*, Thomas Jefferson, *Journal*.
27. Hunt-Jones, *op.cit.*, p. 83.
28. *Ibid.*, Figure 76, pictures a Coffee attributed bust identified as Nelly Conway Madison (1732-1829). The bust descended in the Coles family and is believed to be of Mrs. John Coles II, figure 7 of this article.
29. William Coles, *The Coles Family of Virginia* (New York: privately printed, 1931) is the standard reference for this family.
30. Fillmore Norfleet, *Saint-Memin in Virginia: Portraits and Biographies* (Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1942), pp. 71, 156-157, pictures a profile of John Coles, III, and gives biographical material.
31. Hunt-Jones, *op.cit.*, p. 83, pictures the terra cotta bust of this subject, misidentified as Nelly Conway Madison. Both this bust and a plaster duplicate descended in the Coles family.
32. Norfleet, *op.cit.*, pp. 101, 157, pictures a profile of Isaac A. Coles, and gives biographical material.
33. 5290 DLC, *op.cit.*, letter, March 24, 1820.
34. Francis Butler Simkins, *A History of the South* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), p. 160. South Carolina College is now the University of South Carolina.
35. Rutledge, *op.cit.*, p. 301.



36. *Ibid.*
37. Marvin R. Zahniser, *Charles Cotesworth Pinckney* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1967), p. 276, letter, October 23, 1821.
38. 5290 DLC, *op.cit.*, letter, March 16, 1820.
39. *Ibid.*, letter, November 7, 1821.
40. *Ibid.*, letter, November 22, 1821. In addition, confirmation from Mr. Charles L. Granquist, Assistant Director, Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, August 29, 1978, confirming that Coffee was paid \$100, March 25, 1822, for "repairing" the paintings.
41. *Ibid.*, letter, September 1, 1820.
42. *Ibid.*, letter, September 8, 1820.
43. Lucille McWane Watson, "Thomas Jefferson's other home," *Antiques* (New York: Straight Enterprises, Inc., 1957), Vol. LXXI, No. 4, pp. 342-346.
44. 5290 DLC, *op.cit.*, letter, February 8, 1822.
45. *Ibid.*, letter, June 25, 1822. The term *Galledeos Dorce* is probably a design source although it is not listed in William Banter O'Neal, *Jefferson's Fine Arts Library* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976). The term could be an incorrect spelling or a misquotation by Coffee. However, O'Neal, p. 24, book 5, Plate V should be compared with Coffee's description. This plate is from Henry Aldrich, *The Elements of Civil Architecture* (Oxford: W. Baxter, 1818), 2nd edition.
46. 5290 DLC, *op.cit.*, letter, July 10, 1822.
47. *Ibid.*, letters, January 3, 1823, and February 14, 1823.
48. *Ibid.*, letter, March 22, 1823.
49. O'Neal, *op.cit.*, Plates XXVII, XXXIX, and XXXI.
50. 5290 DLC, *op.cit.*, letter, January 2, 1824.
51. *Ibid.*, letter, January 11, 1824.
52. *Ibid.*, letter, September 11, 1824.
53. Groce, *op.cit.*, p. 19.
54. 5290 DLC, *op.cit.*, letter, December 1, 1825. For Bowers see Bush, *op.cit.*, pp. 95-98.
55. Groce, *op.cit.*, and Rutledge, *op.cit.*, give good details of Coffee's northern career.
56. Groce and Wallace, *op.cit.*, p. 135.

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*Miss Caroline Weekley, Curator of Decorative Arts, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Virginia;*

*Mr. John C. Larson, Assistant to the Director of Restoration, Old Salem, Incorporated, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.*



We are pleased to record here an interesting jug found after Bradford L. Rauschenberg's article "'B. DuVal & Co/ Richmond': a Newly Discovered Pottery" was published in the May, 1978, *Journal*. The cobalt decorated saltglazed stoneware jug (below) is impressed to indicate that it was made by John Peter Schermerhorn, the potter believed to have brought New York potting traditions to Richmond through his employment in the Benjamin DuVal pottery. Schermerhorn is listed in the 1820 census of manufacturers as a potter in Henrico County, and an advertisement the same year locates the pottery at "Port Mayo, near Rockets." Height 12 inches, width 9 inches. Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, a gift of Mr. Lindsay C. Grigsby.





*Figure 1. Mr. and Mrs. William Boswell Lamb and their Daughter, Martha Anne, circa 1803. Oil on canvas, 30 x 25 inches. The Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, loaned by Mr. and Mrs. Alban K. Barrus. MESDA research file S-7271.*



## *Henry Benbridge: Portraits in Small from Norfolk*

CAROLYN J. WEEKLEY

Several months ago the writer was invited to examine a small group portrait identified as the Lamb family of Norfolk, Virginia (Fig. 1). The painting was impressive in its charm and quality as well as in its peculiar familiarity. The poses of the three subjects, the classical settings, and the less obvious misunderstandings of anatomical drawing suggested the work of Henry Benbridge. Since then, a similar portrait in small by the same hand (Fig. 2) has come to the author's attention. This group likeness, of another important Norfolk family, passed through Lindsay descendants to very recent years. These two family group paintings are the only examples of their kind known for Norfolk during the first decade of the nineteenth century. They are also the first to be attributed to Benbridge's Norfolk period.<sup>1</sup>

Neither of these portraits is signed, which is not especially disturbing when one realizes that there are only a few portraits by Benbridge that do bear valid signatures. The attribution of works to him therefore relies heavily on an awareness of his painting style and circumstantial evidence of time and place, and the possibility of an artist-sitter encounter. These considerations are critical in the attribution of the two Norfolk portraits to Benbridge.

The most complete account of Henry Benbridge's life and work, published in 1971, was written by Robert G. Stewart of the National Portrait Gallery.<sup>2</sup> This important research



*Figure 2. Mr. and Mrs. Francis Stubbs Taylor, their Daughter Sarah and Another Unidentified Taylor Child, circa 1803-6. Oil on canvas, 30 x 25 inches. The Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Douglas. MESDA research file S-7272.*

effort documents that Benbridge was born in 1743 in Philadelphia, that he began painting as early as 1758, that he studied abroad, and that he returned to Pennsylvania in 1770. He married Esther Sage in 1772 and settled in Charleston, South Carolina the same year. He continued to work there intermittently through part of the 1790s. His only child, a son named after

him, was born in December, 1772. His wife Esther (often called Hetty) probably died sometime before May 1, 1773. He never remarried. He moved to Norfolk, Virginia sometime between 1790 and 1801, and he was buried in Philadelphia in January of 1812.

Benbridge was among the few American-born artists of his day who could afford to study abroad in England and Italy. In Italy he met Thomas Patch (1725-1782), an English artist noted for his caricatures and conversation pieces, both in oil and engraved. As Stewart points out in his essay, Benbridge was clearly influenced by this man's work, although the extent of that influence deserves further explanation. Benbridge adopted the format of small figure sizes, and occasionally the heads of his sitters are exaggerated in size, as they are in caricature drawing. However, Benbridge's intent was always to paint strong likenesses rather than stylized versions of his sitters.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to the artist's two Norfolk paintings, at least thirteen portraits in small have survived which are either signed by or attributed to Benbridge.<sup>4</sup> The provenances of these and other documentation indicate that the artist executed works of this size from the time he was in Rome (1765) to his late years in Norfolk.

It is difficult without recorded references to know why and precisely when Henry Benbridge took up residence in Norfolk after having spent most of his career in Charleston. The last record of him in Charleston is the 1790 directory, which lists him at 30 Broad Street. The next directory, 1794, does not list Benbridge.<sup>5</sup> Presumably he moved to Virginia sometime after the 1790 directory and before his meeting with the artist Thomas Sully. However, two particularly curious and inexplicable references to the artist's Virginia associations appeared before 1790, in 1784 Charleston newspapers. One of these notices stated that Henry Benbridge, Esq. had "arrived from Philadelphia, but last from Virginia."<sup>6</sup> The implications here are puzzling but clearly suggest that the artist had spent more than a casual two or three days in Virginia. Perhaps he was in Norfolk, Virginia's leading seaport at this time and a city which could have supported an artist of Benbridge's caliber. While all of this remains conjecture, it must be pointed out that a 1780s painting trip to Virginia by Benbridge would clarify the date and the attribution of a double portrait by





Figure 3. *The Gatling Children*, pre-1790. Oil on canvas, 40 x 35 inches. Private collection.

him of two North Carolina sitters—the Gatling children (Fig. 3).<sup>7</sup> The subjects were from Hertford County, which borders on the southeastern Virginia state line.

Beyond the vague 1784 newspaper references, there are no records or surviving paintings to indicate other visits by the artist to Virginia prior to 1799. According to Stewart, 1799 was the year Thomas Sully met Benbridge in Norfolk. Stewart's source for this information is William Dunlap's well known *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, first published in 1834.<sup>8</sup> The



reliance on this single reference from Dunlap is risky and in all probability it is incorrect. To understand this, one must carefully weigh in chronological order all of Dunlap's existing notes on this meeting, part of which were first recorded in his diary.

In 1833, Dunlap visited Sully in Philadelphia and afterwards made notes of their conversation in his diary which reads, in part:

It was at Norfolk that Sully knew Bembridge. He has a book of engravings bot. after his death in Phila. with his autograph.<sup>9</sup>

It is important that in this first record of information from Sully to Dunlap there is no date reference. A year later Dunlap makes two conflicting statements regarding their meeting in his *History*. Obviously, he had confused the actual date of Sully's arrival in Norfolk with the date of Sully's first encounter with Benbridge — two very distinct happenings.

In his essay on "Bembridge" he writes:

In the year 1799, Mr. Thomas Sully, then a youth, found Mr. Bembridge settled in high estimation in Norfolk, Virginia. His works excited Sully to attempt oil-painting, and to introduce himself to the veteran painter, Sully sat to him for his picture, and was "well repaid," as he has said, "by his useful and kind instruction."<sup>10</sup>

Later on, in Dunlap's essay on Sully, there is a statement which is probably truthful as regards their date of meeting. A brief summary of Dunlap's narrative preceding this quotation is necessary for the reader to fully understand its implications. Thomas Sully grew up in Charleston, South Carolina and was apprenticed during the mid 1790s to Jean Zolbius Belzons, miniature artist and his brother-in-law. Thomas's older brother, Lawrence, was working in Norfolk and Richmond as a miniaturist during these years. In 1799 young Sully and Belzons had a rather serious disagreement and Thomas departed from Charleston at the mercy of a sea captain whose vessel was bound for Norfolk. Upon his arrival there his brother, Lawrence, paid the passage due and secured his transportation to

Richmond, where Lawrence and his family lived. All of this transpired in 1799. Dunlap continues this narration with the following:

In the year 1801, Mr. Lawrence Sully removed his family to Norfolk, and of course Thomas went with him. At this time, the younger brother was the better artist, and the main support of the household. But not content with ivory and water-colours, and stimulated by the sight of some portraits and other pictures by Mr. Henry Bembridge, who was then exercising his pencil in the Borough, Tom determined to try oil, and made his preparations accordingly. . . . Tom tried portraits from life, of a small size, in imitation of Mr. Bembridge.<sup>11</sup>

It seems logical from all the data available that 1801 is the correct date of the Benbridge-Sully meeting. Further, it is unlikely that the young, destitute Sully arriving briefly in Norfolk in 1799 would have had either the funds or the initiative to engage a portrait sitting when his priorities were to reach his brother in Richmond as quickly as possible.

The 1801 meeting date does not preclude the possibility that Benbridge had settled in Norfolk a year or perhaps two years earlier. References to a Henry Benbridge in Norfolk begin as early as 1800. Most of these are difficult to interpret because the artist's son, also named Henry (called Harry), moved to Norfolk circa 1800.<sup>12</sup> However confusing the distinctions are in these records, it is significant that father and son can be documented in the same locale at the same time. This has particular relevance since Harry was an only child and Hetty, the artist's wife, had died many years earlier.

In 1800 a Henry Benbridge purchased one share of the cost of building the Presbyterian Church in Norfolk. It is unclear as to whether this was the father or the son. In either case, the evidence of a connection between the Benbridge family and other subscribers to the church is significant. There were less than 150 subscribers and purchasers of pews for this project and among the others were Francis Stubbs Taylor and William Boswell Lamb.<sup>13</sup>

Genealogical research of the Lamb family of Norfolk strongly suggests that William B. Lamb, his wife Margaret

Stuart, and their first child, Martha Anne, are the subjects of the painting shown in figure one.<sup>14</sup> In a similar manner, Francis S. Taylor, his wife Ann Lindsay, their daughter Sarah, and an unidentified younger child are the most likely subjects of Benbridge's painting illustrated in figure two.<sup>15</sup> Both paintings were executed some time between 1803 and 1806.

Other possible social and business encounters between these families and the Benbridges exist. For instance, Harry Benbridge operated the well-known Norfolk Hotel on Main Street from October, 1804 through the early months of 1806.<sup>16</sup> William B. Lamb also had an office on Main Street during a portion of these years.<sup>17</sup>

The date range of these portraits, 1803-1806, is based on the ages of the sitters and their dress fashions, and coincides with the probable period of the artist's activity in Norfolk. The artist was definitely in Norfolk in 1801, when Sully saw him. He was there in 1803 when he placed the following notice in the Norfolk Herald:

DOCTOR J. K. READ,

SIR,

I have upwards of twenty years been afflicted with an obstinate and distressing Asthma, and violent cough, which has frequently brought me to the brink of the grave. — I have made many applications to the first in medical repute, and have tried almost every Medicine which has been recommended as serviceable in this complaint. I have at times found relief from Church's Drops, but such relief was temporary only. — I was induced last summer, during a very severe paroxysm, to try your Balsamic Cough Elixer, and to my great satisfaction, found such relief after taking two bottles, that I was determined to perservere in its use. By the use of this Medicine alone, the paroxysms are entirely removed, and the Cough so slight and trivial, as to be wholly disregarded. My appetite has returned, I have regained my flesh and spirits, and am now able to pursue my business without interruption.

Wishing those who labour under the same distressing complaint, to derive equal benefit, I have thought it



right to inform you of the advantages I have received,  
from the use of your valuable Medicine, and you have  
my permission to make what use you please of this letter.

Your friend, &c.

(Signed)

HENRY BENBRIDGE, Sen.<sup>18</sup>



*Figure 4. Detail of Figure 2, head of Francis S. Taylor.*



There are no other specific references to the artist in Norfolk after this date, but it is thought that he continued to stay with or near his son, whose advertisements continued to appear in local newspapers until April 19th, 1806. By 1810, Harry had moved to Baltimore.<sup>19</sup> The father may have followed him there, going later to Philadelphia where Dunlap says he died.

Both of the Norfolk paintings show a variety of stylistic similarities to other works by Benbridge. The figures have unusually well-formed and delineated mouths, with rather heavy shadows below their lower lips (Fig. 4). The subjects' eyes and brows are also given form by dark shading, a treatment which is very characteristic of Benbridge's style. The artist was never successful at drawing hands, and in his small portraits these features are usually ill-defined and too small, with thin pointed fingers. This kind of handling is seen in both the Lamb and the Taylor portraits and compares favorably with sitters' hands in the portrait of John Saltar and his family (Fig. 5).

Other aspects of the Saltar portrait relate particularly to the Taylor painting. The heads of Mrs. Saltar and Mr. Taylor are strikingly similar in pose and size, and in the drawing of the eyes, nose, and mouth. The resemblance here is so close that one could almost imagine a blood relationship between the two sitters.

Benbridge often tilted the heads of his sitters towards the center of the picture in order to balance and unify his group compositions. This is seen not only with Mrs. Saltar, but also with the child sitting at her feet. The same technique was employed in both the Taylor and Lamb likenesses, particularly with the children. The standing poses of the men in the Norfolk portraits compare closely with that of Jacob Shubrick (Fig. 6), painted sometime after 1778 by Benbridge in Charleston.

While the costumes of the Taylor and Lamb families are typical of their time, the artist's treatment here is not as careful or detailed as it is in his earlier work. This is probably due as much to a style change in dress fabrics as it was to the artist's declining ability in old age. The landscape and architectural settings in both Norfolk works are also devoid of crisp detailing in the foreground. However, the scumbled, ill-defined foliage of the trees and the scraggy tree trunks seen



*Figure 5. The John Saltar Family, pre-1790. Oil on canvas, 30 x 25 inches. Collection of Mrs. Katherine Hellman. Photograph courtesy of the Frick Art Reference Library.*

in the Taylor portrait are similar to background features in any number of his paintings from 1765 throughout the years of his professional career in America.

It is difficult to comment specifically on color and color relationships between these Virginia paintings and earlier examples by the artist. The costumes in these late works are, by the very nature of their period, dull when compared to the exuberant satins and damasks worn by Benbridge's Charles-

ton and Philadelphia clientele. Flesh tones, however, seem to compare closely. The light source in both Virginia portraits comes from the upper left, which appears to have been the artist's preference throughout his career. The left sides of the sitters' faces are placed in considerable shadow, particularly below the cheek bones. This, again, is a characteristic element of many of his earlier paintings.

As stated earlier, the attribution of the Taylor and Lamb portraits relies entirely on circumstantial evidence and their content of certain style characteristics associated with Benbridge's work. There is no question that this artist was in Norfolk at the time, and was equipped and was willing to engage sitters. No other artists working in this format are known to have visited Norfolk during these years, except the aspiring Sully whose earliest work could not approach the sophistication of these likenesses.

A number of stylistic similarities and parallels have been pointed out here. However, there are minor dissimilarities which may raise questions in the viewer's mind. In considering these, one must be careful to weigh the changes in dress fashions and taste that occurred at the turn of the century. These changes ultimately influenced pictorial representations such as portraits. This occurrence is further complicated by the sparsity of documented 1790s paintings by Benbridge. It is therefore difficult to assess totally and offer comparisons of his style when the continuity of his work is broken by a ten-year gap. In all fairness, the writer must admit that this has been an especially worrisome element in preparing this article. Yet the writer must conclude that there are sufficient similarities and nuances of basic technique that strongly indicate a Benbridge attribution. The evidence, though incomplete at this time, offers us two unique Virginia portraits executed by Benbridge in the last years of his life.

*Miss Weekley, formerly Curator of the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, is currently Curator of Decorative Arts at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Virginia.*





*Figure 6. Jacob Shubrick, pre-1790. Oil on canvas, 30¼ x 25 inches. Collection of the Society of the Cincinnati-Anderson House Museum, Gift of W. B. Shubrick Clymer. Photograph courtesy of the Society of the Cincinnati.*



## NOTES

1. Robert G. Stewart, *Henry Benbridge (1743-1812): American Portrait Painter*, (City of Washington: National Portrait Gallery, 1971), pp. 21, 28, catalogue entries 7, 8.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 60-66, 86-88.
5. Jacob Milligan, *The Charleston Directory* (T. B. Bowen, 1790) and Jacob Milligan, *The Charleston Directory* (W. P. Young, September 1794).
6. Stewart, *op.cit.*, p. 20.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35, catalogue entry 21.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22; William Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design In the United States*, (New York: George P. Scott and Co., 1834), Vol. I, p. 143.
9. William Dunlap, *Diary of William Dunlap (1766-1839)*, (New York: The New York Historical Society, 1930), p. 691.
10. Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress*, Vol. I, p. 143.
11. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 104-107.
12. Stewart, *Henry Benbridge*, pp. 19, 21.
13. Edward W. James, *Lower Norfolk Antiquary*. (New York: Peter Smith, 1895), p. 66.
14. William Boswell Lamb, son of Col. Richard Lamb and Clarrissa Boswell, married Margaret Stuart sometime before March, 1801. Their daughter, Martha Anne, was born January 12, 1802. William Boswell Lamb was active in Norfolk politics, serving as an alderman for the Borough of Norfolk from 1803 to 1810, as a director of the Virginia Branch Bank in 1806, and as President of the Virginia Bank from 1815 to 1827. He served in a number of governmental posts, including Mayor of Norfolk in 1810, 1812, 1814, part of 1816, and briefly in 1823. He died in 1852. Information for the above gleaned from Norfolk City Marriage Bonds (1797-1850), the 1806 *Norfolk Directory*, pp. 21, 36, 40, the 1810 and 1820 Census Records for Virginia, and William S. Forrest, *Historical and Descriptive Sketches of Norfolk and Vicinity*, (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakeston, 1853), p. 286. The author is grateful to Ms. Pam McLellan Geddy, Valentine Museum for compiling this material.
15. This portrait has a long documented history of ownership by Lindsay family descendants. In fact, it has traditionally been called

the Lindsay portrait. Originally, the subjects were identified as Col. William Lindsay (died 1838) his wife Mary Anne Newton, with two of their children. Col. Lindsay and Miss Newton did not marry until 1808. Their first child, William Reuben Lindsay, was born the next year, and their second child, Virginia Lindsay, could not have been born before 1810. Judging from the age of the children in the portrait, the painting would have to date circa 1812 if the subjects represented are the Col. William Lindsay family. It is the author's opinion that the date is too late for the style of dress, and more importantly, it does not coincide with Benbridge's years of activity in Norfolk. Genealogical research reveals that there is only one likely Lindsay associated family which coincides with this time framework, specifically, Francis S. Taylor, who married Ann Lindsay (sister of Col. William Lindsay) on October 11, 1797. The records are not clear as to the birth dates and names of their children. It is known that one daughter, Sarah, married in 1819. This suggests that she was born circa 1800 and may be the oldest child in the portrait. There is also some question as to Francis Taylor's occupation and role in Norfolk. The *Virginia Argus* for 6 February 1805 lists him as a clerk for the bank of Norfolk. In 1814 the *Norfolk Gazette & Public Ledger* carried his advertisement for a female academy. Information for this entry gleaned from the 1810 and 1820 Census Records for Virginia, Norfolk City *Directories* for 1801 and 1806, and Norfolk City Marriage Bonds (1797-1850). Also, see Edward L. Lomax, *Genealogy of the Virginia Family of Lomax*, (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1973), pp. 39-40; Margaret Isabella Lindsay, *The Lindsays of America*, (Albany: Joel Munsells Sons Pub., 1889), pp. 233-237; the *Norfolk Weekly Journal*; and *Country Intelligencer* for October 11, 1793, p. 8. The author is grateful to Ms. Pam McLellan Geddy, Valentine Museum, and Mr. Christian Kolbe for compiling this material.

16. *The Norfolk Gazette and Publick Ledger*, Norfolk, October 9, 1804, p. 3.
17. Rev. W. H. T. Squires, "Norfolk in By-Gone Days," *Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch*, June 13, 1940.
18. *The Norfolk Herald*, Norfolk, February 5, 1803, p. 3.
19. Stewart, *Henry Benbridge*, p. 21.

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